

Remarks:

Prior to entry of the current Amendment, claims 1-20 remained pending in the application. Claims 1-5, 7 and 8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,200,958 to Hamilton et al. ("Hamilton"). Claims 13-14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,386,271 to Maekawa et al. ("Maekawa"). Claim 6 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hamilton in view of "submitted prior art in the background of applicant's specification." Claims 9-12, 19 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hamilton in view of Maekawa. Claims 15-16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Maekawa in view of Hamilton. Claims 17-18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Maekawa.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

As noted above, claims 1-5, 7 and 8 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Hamilton. Applicant has amended claim 1 to clarify that *correlating includes comparing the present description of the one or more symptoms to a database relating symptoms to known printer system malfunctions*. Hamilton fails to disclose comparing a present description of symptoms to a database relating symptoms to known printer malfunctions. In fact, Hamilton fails to disclose any use of a database relating symptoms to known printer system malfunctions. Hamilton discloses nothing more than a "diagnostic process" of an undefined nature that occurs between monitoring the occurrence of one or more faults and providing the results of the diagnostic process (col. 8, lines 57-58). Although Hamilton indicates that "a specific, established sequence of steps" may occur (col. 8, line 19), it gives no

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clue as to the nature of those steps. Accordingly, Hamilton does not anticipate the subject matter recited in applicant's amended claim 1.

For at least the above reasons, applicant submits that amended claim 1 recites subject matter not anticipated by Hamilton. As such, amended claim 1 should be allowed. Claims 2-5, 7 and 8 depend from claim 1. Accordingly, these claims should be allowed for at least the same reasons as claim 1.

Claims 13 and 14 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by Maekawa. Applicant has amended claim 13 to clarify that the system for diagnosing a printer malfunction includes a database *relating descriptions of symptoms of printer system malfunctions to known printer system malfunctions* and a processor configured to collect a *present description of one or more symptoms of a present printer system malfunction to compare the present description to the database relationships*.

Maekawa discloses the use of weighted rules to identify an abnormal operating condition of a copier and possible repair procedures. To identify a cause of trouble, the system of Maekawa evaluates input data from the copy machine and assesses the grades of various conditions in the copy machine. Accordingly, the database of Maekawa includes the "membership functions corresponding to respective conditions and contents and rule weights of respective rules assigned to each machine model of [a] copying machine" (col. 14, lines 16-19). The system of Maekawa includes steps of calculating probabilities of possible printer malfunctions and determining the most likely basis of a printer malfunction based on the ***calculated probabilities*** of all possible malfunctions. The data used to calculate the composite possibility of a cause of trouble are stored in the database of Maekawa.

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Such a system does not anticipate the system recited in applicant's amended claim 13, where the processor is configured to collect descriptions of present symptoms and compare them to symptoms/malfunction relationships in the database. In fact, Maekawa does not even disclose a database relating descriptions of symptoms of printer system malfunctions to known printer system malfunctions.

For at least the above reasons, applicant submits that amended claim 13 recites subject matter not anticipated by Maekawa. As such, claim 13 should be allowed. Claim 14 depends from claim 13. Accordingly, claim 14 should be allowed for at least the same reasons as claim 13.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

Claim 6 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hamilton in view of submitted prior art in the background of applicant's specification. Applicant has amended claim 1, from which claim 6 depends, to clarify that the subject matter recited in amended claim 1 is not anticipated by Hamilton. Because Hamilton does not anticipate the subject matter of amended claim 1, modifying Hamilton to include a user reporting a printer error would not make obvious the subject matter recited in claim 6. Accordingly, the rejection of claim 6 should be withdrawn.

Claims 9-12, 19 and 20 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Hamilton in view of Maekawa. Claims 9-12 depend, ultimately, from claim 1. As noted above, Hamilton fails to disclose comparing a present description of symptoms to a database relating symptoms to known printer malfunctions. The database of Maekawa includes "membership functions corresponding to respective conditions and contents and rule weights of respective rules." Again, there is no disclosure of comparing a present description of symptoms to a database relating symptoms to known printer malfunctions. It thus would not have been obvious to modify the teachings of Hamilton according to the teachings of Maekawa to achieve the subject matter recited in applicant's amended claim 1, or to achieve the subject matter recited in claims 9-12. Accordingly, the rejections of claims 9-12 should be withdrawn.

Regarding claim 19, applicant notes that claim 19 recites "comparing the described symptoms to a database relating descriptions of symptoms to known printer system malfunctions." As noted above, neither Hamilton nor Maekawa disclose such comparison. For at least the above reason, the subject matter recited in amended claim 19 is not rendered obvious by the combination of Hamilton and Maekawa and should be allowed. Claim 20 depends from claim 19 and should be allowed for at least the same reasons as claim 19.

Claims 15 and 16 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) over Maekawa in view of Hamilton. Claims 15 and 16 depend from claim 13, which is discussed above. As noted with respect to claim 13, Maekawa does not disclose a processor configured to collect descriptions of present symptoms, and compare them to symptoms/malfunction relationships in a database. Maekawa is not configured to use the data contained in such an error log in the diagnosis of a problem.

As discussed in Maekawa, "fuzzy logic" is used to monitor the conditions in a copy machine and to diagnose problems based on the grades of certain conditions present in the copy machine. Calculations of the possibilities of various rules are made utilizing the grades of various copy machine conditions. The results of those calculations are used to diagnose a problem. There is no suggestion in Maekawa that the calculations referred to could take place based on the contents of an error log that records the identity of a fault location and the time at which the fault occurred. For at least the above reasons, claims 15 and 16 recite subject matter that is not rendered obvious by the combination of Maekawa and Hamilton, and claims 15 and 16 thus should be allowed.

Claims 17 and 18 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Maekawa and "knowledge of the art." Claims 17 and 18 depend from claim 13. Claim 13 is distinguished from Maekawa above. As such, applicant thus requests that the rejections of claims 19 and 20 be withdrawn for at least the same reasons described above.

Conclusion

Applicant believes that this application is now in condition for allowance, in view of the above amendments and remarks. Accordingly, applicant respectfully requests that the Examiner issue a Notice of Allowability covering the pending claims. If the Examiner has any questions, or if a telephone interview would in any way advance prosecution of the application, please contact the undersigned attorney of record.

Respectfully submitted,

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CERTIFICATE OF FACSIMILE TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being facsimile transmitted to Examiner Y. Qin, Group Art Unit 2622, Assistant Commissioner for Patents, at facsimile number (703) 872-9306 on August 19, 2005.

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